

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 1007

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION, Urging the United States Congress to enhance federal veterans benefits for members of the National Guard and other reserve components of the armed forces who have been called into active federal service.

WHEREAS, those who dedicate their lives to protecting our nation perform a brave and valuable service to our state and nation and are deserving of special legislative recognition; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, the United States has suffered significant loss of life and property in terrorist attacks, culminating in the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon; and

WHEREAS, the United States is now engaged in combat on several domestic and international fronts, being fought by all of the nation's military forces; and

WHEREAS, the size of the active duty United States military forces has been steadily reduced by approximately one-third since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, so that National Guard and Reserve troops now account for nearly one-half of the United States' total military strength; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense has mobilized more National Guard and Reserve members for the Global War on Terrorism than for any other national emergency since World War II. Nearly forty percent of United States military personnel currently serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom are National Guard and Reserve troops who are serving in a manner equivalent to the service of our regular active duty troops; and

WHEREAS, National Guard and Reserve members are highly skilled and fully cross-trained for domestic emergency and counter-terrorism missions and deployments abroad. Since September 11, 2001, they have been deployed in large numbers for both types of missions; and

WHEREAS, all of the activated National Guard and Reserve troops face substantial burdens and risks, including extended separations from family and loved ones; postponement of educational and career development opportunities; forfeiting civilian job compensation and benefits, while often incurring additional expenditures and increased personal and family debt; facing the physical and psychological dangers of deployment to hostile regions, involvement in combat, and the constant fear of death or maiming from roadside bombs, conventional weapons, and other terrorist weapons; and

enduring the challenges of transitioning back into civilian life after each deployment, while preparing for the next deployment into active military duty; and

WHEREAS, the various federal benefits for National Guard and Reserve troops serving on active duty are often significantly less than those received by the full-time military personnel serving beside them in equivalent roles; and

WHEREAS, it is crucial that the nation retain these highly trained citizen-soldiers within the National Guard and Reserves following the completion of each deployment into active military service:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives of the Eightieth Legislature of the State of South Dakota, the Senate concurring therein, that the South Dakota Legislature strongly urges the United States Congress to increase the benefits for National Guard and Reserve members by designating full veterans status for National Guard and Reserve members who have been ordered to active military duty under U.S.C., Title 10 or Title 32, and who provide honorable service for the time period so ordered; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that National Guard and Reserve members who are ordered to active military duty under U.S.C., Title 10 or Title 32, for a cumulative period of one hundred eighty days or more may enroll in the active duty GI Bill for educational assistance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that National Guard and Reserve members who are ordered to active military duty under U.S.C., Title 10 or Title 32, for a cumulative period of thirty days or more may enroll in individual and family TRICARE health insurance upon their demobilization from active duty status and return to drill status, at a co-pay and premium rate comparable to that of federal employees participating in similar health insurance programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that each National Guard and Reserve member may establish a pre-tax/tax deferred savings plan, similar to but apart from a 401K retirement plan, which could be tapped without penalty to help cover financial expenses when the member is mobilized into active duty; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that National Guard and Reserve members who have been ordered to active military combat service be provided eligibility for burial in national cemeteries; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the age of eligibility for retirement benefits be advanced from age sixty to one year earlier for every two years beyond twenty years that a person has provided honorable service in the National Guard or Reserve.

Adopted by the House of Representatives,
Concurred in by the Senate,

February 05, 2005
February 08, 2005

Matthew Michels
Speaker of the House

Karen Gerdes
Chief Clerk of the House

Dennis Daugaard
President of the Senate

Patricia Adam
Secretary of the Senate